Worship Resources for May 31st, 2020—Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Narrative Lectionary: Gifts of the Spirit, Acts 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 (Mark 1:4-8)

Fifty days after Passover, the Jewish people in diaspora around the Mediterranean would gather in Jerusalem with the Jewish community and celebrate the first harvest of the springtime. In Acts 2, the disciples of Jesus were gathered in a room when suddenly they experienced the rush of a wind and the vision of divided tongues of fire appearing on their heads, and they were able to speak the languages of the peoples around them. The pilgrims to Jerusalem were astonished as they heard these Galileans speaking their languages! But some scoffed, saying they must be drunk. Peter stood and boldly proclaimed that they were not drunk, but that this was what the prophet Joel had proclaimed would come: the young would see visions, the old dream dreams, and those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Peter sees this as a sign of a new age: the Holy Spirit at work among the faithful.

The alternative first reading is from Numbers 11:24-30. When Moses was feeling overburdened by the work of God, God shared the Spirit with seventy elders to help minister to the people. However, two others also started prophesying in the camp. Joshua told Moses to stop them, but Moses told him not to be jealous for his sake—instead, he wishes that everyone had the spirit of God among them! Those who do good, who share the gifts of the Spirit, are doing the work of God.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b praises God for all God’s great works in creation. In wisdom, God made everything, and provided for all creatures. God’s spirit goes forth, and renews the earth. The psalmist sings praises to God and delights in all of God’s creation.

The Epistle reading is a choice between the first reading of Acts 2:1-21 or 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13. In the passage from Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth, he expounds on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Corinthians had debated over which gifts were greater, and Paul argued that there were a variety of gifts, but from the same Spirit. All are members of the same body of Christ, and to each has been given a manifestation of the Holy Spirit for the common good.

On the evening of the day of Christ’s resurrection, in John’s account, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room (except for Thomas), and breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit. In John 20:19-23, Jesus declares that as God the Father has sent him, so he is sending the disciples, with the power to forgive and retain sins.

An alternative to John 20 is John 7:37-39. Jesus was in Galilee for the Jewish festival of Sukkoth, the festival of Booths. Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit as a river a living water, and for all those who are thirsty to come to him. The writer of John narrated that believers would receive the Spirit when Jesus was glorified.

The Narrative Lectionary also focuses on the Gifts of the Spirit, beginning with the first four verses of Acts 2, how the Holy Spirit rested on the disciples and gave them each the gift of tongues. This passage is paired with 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. This passage is slightly expanded from the Revised Common Lectionary, sharing some of the context of Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts. This community is primarily Greek, and Paul reminds them that when they were pagans, they followed and worshiped idols. All good gifts come from the Holy Spirit, and only good works are done through the Holy Spirit.

In Mark 1:4-8, John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The people of Jerusalem came out to be baptized by him, but John told them he only baptized them with water, but the one coming after him was more powerful, and would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

On this Day of Pentecost, as we are in a different world with covid-19, where do we see the Spirit at work? What gifts are being discovered, or perhaps rediscovered in this time? Long ago, the disciples were gathered together, but they were in a room alone when the Spirit descended upon them. Even though we are not able to be gathered together, the Spirit is at work among us and within us now, in new ways. Where might God be calling you to trust in the works of the Spirit, and how can we discern, acknowledge, and share in the gifts of the Spirit now?

Unison Call to Worship (Psalm 113)

**Praise the Lord!**

**Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore.**

**From the rising of the sun to its setting**

**the name of the Lord is to be praised.**

**The Lord is high above all nations,**

**and God’s glory above the heavens.**

**Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high,**

**who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?**

**God raises the poor from the dust,**

**and lifts the needy from the ash heap,**

**to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.**

**Praise the Lord!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we do not use the gifts You have given us. We worry that we will not have enough, and we hoard possessions and wealth. We do not stop to help others because we believe our time is more important. We lift up our own desires above the needs of others and put ourselves first, the exact opposite of what Jesus taught us, to become last of all and servant of all. Forgive us. Call us into accountability. Remind us of the vast richness of the life You have given us, and that we always have something to give. Help us to learn to set boundaries so we do not run dry, but lead us into a way of life in which we give of what we can, ask for help when we need, and carry each other’s burdens. Help us to build up Your heavenly realm here on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” We are one. We are all needed and valued. You are part of the body of Christ. You are very much needed, very much loved. Share your gifts, because God needs you, and be part of God’s reign now and always. Amen.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, You have bound us together as one body in Christ. Across time and space, we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and nothing can separate us from truly belonging to each other as the church. In the midst of these trying times, renew in us Your wisdom, Your peaceful presence, Your enduring strength. May we seek deeper relationship with You, and connect with each other as the body. May we listen to Your wisdom calling us, and notice anew the ways Your spirit is at work in the world and in each of us. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.